



The Avenue Project Task Force

Wednesday, September 28th, 2005

6:00pm-8:00pm

The Dorchester House

1353 Dorchester Avenue, Dorchester

Meeting Notes

Attendance: Task Force Members: Michael Mackan, N. Paul Ton That, Arlene Lopes, Rosanne Foley, Jane Howard, Marissa Coleman, Anne Riley, Ed Crowley, Richard O'Mara, Sean Denniston, Eileen Fenton, Leslie MacWeeney; Ralph DeNisco-BTD, Marty McDonough-DND, Andre Porter-ONS, Inés Soto-BRA, and Jeremy Rosenberger-BRA

I. Welcome

- Meeting was called to order by the Dorchester Avenue Project manager Ines Soto.
- Ines requested for any comment on the format of the agenda. Leslie MacWeeney thought the agendas should be shorter and future agendas should have topic durations.

II. Ground Rules

- Ines requested comment regarding the ground rules that were handed out and inquired if the group found the rules to be acceptable. It was noted that the humor rule should be disregarded.

III. Vision/Mission Statement

- Ines initiated a discussion regarding Rosanne Foley's Task Force vision statement. Rosanne elaborated on her proposed statement that was distributed for the night's meeting. A brainstorming session regarding the vision followed.
- Ed Crowley inquired if a breakdown of costs per item or for redevelopment could be looked into for budget considerations.
- Ralph DeNisco mentioned many things that can occur outside of budget for improvement. BTD wants to be realistic and hit places that are valid for improvement. Ralph elaborated on the need to think outside the box and the need to think how projects can work in conjunction with the Dot Ave Project.
- Ines mentioned that she has been internally trying to get information to understand what is going on with projects on Dot Avenue. Hopefully in the future, items can be presented in status reports.
- Jane Howard volunteered her expertise toward a transportation study or transportation improvements.
- Ines brought up the notion that there might be a need for subcommittees, but those situations will present themselves as the Task Force moves ahead
- Leslie MacWeeney questioned as to what street Dot Ave could be compared to. She brought up Mass Ave in Cambridge 20 years ago and how it was relatively "so-so". Now the stretch is vibrant. She thought it would be interesting to compare certain places and why they turned around. Andre Porter responded that the mayor has been a major player in many of the city's initiatives. Jane Howard asked if the city owns any parcels along the Avenue. Ines responded that the city does not own any parcels along the Ave. Arlene Lopes made a point that South Street in JP is a good

example of revitalization. Andre also mentioned that constant dialogue can accrue branding for an area. He elaborated that merchants have expressed concerns of paying more in taxes in rent. DND encourages store patrons to ask merchants about upgrading and creating a vested interest to a collective “buy-in”.

- With regard to the budget for the Avenue, Anne Riley asked if the goals the Task Force creates are unreasonable, how could they go about seeking additional money. Ines mentioned brown funds and grants as a place to start for additional funds. But she made a point to make sure the allocated funds are utilized to their fullest potential.
- In reference to a vision and street improvement comparisons, Leslie said teens on Washington wanted clean streets, but merchants thought opposite. It could possibly be due to lack of vision. Andre responded by saying there is no one magic bullet.
- Marisa questioned if the budget allocated funds toward cultivating business into educational events to establish further social relationships. Leslie responded by saying such a process is an uphill battle. Arlene continued by mentioning how tough it is dealing with the businesses. Her group has initiated lots of outreach and the results have been minimal. She emphasized that they need to make an effort where people will care and overall education is necessary. Anne responded to increase taxes when they (business owners) don't improve their business.

IV. Meeting Procedures

- Ines opened up the topic of meeting procedures by asking how the Task Force wants to run the meeting. Ed suggested that Robert's Rule is used in an argumentative / non-consensus circumstance. Ines responded by asking the group if they want to work by consensus. Sean Denniston responded that the group needs to get an idea of what they need to vote on (i.e. when the Task Force allocates funding). Leslie followed up that Robert's Rule is best for important issues. Ines responded that the Task Force will do consensus to vote.

V. Dot Ave Update

- Last Monday, Ines met with Councilor Kelly to discuss Andrew Square's role regarding the Dot Ave Project. After discussion regarding the Square's role, it was deemed that Andrew's Square has many issues and it would get its own initiative and planning study. The Ave Project will now stop where Dorchester Ave zoning meets South Boston's zoning on Dot Ave. Ines presented a draft map of the new Ave Project boundaries without Andrews Square. Ines will send a map to the Task Force in the upcoming weeks.

VI. Discussion

- Ralph DeNisco opened the discussion by stating that the repainting of crosswalks will go through to November. Ed asked if they are the sidewalks will be just painted or utilize thermoplastics. Ralph stated that the sidewalks will be thermoplastic. Ed mentioned that this sidewalk materials situation is where a learning curve is important to know. Mike Mackan then inquired about a plan to pave the Ave. Ralph replied that some sections need to be repaved and striped with new crosswalks, but it varies down the Ave. Anne then asked Ralph if brick crosswalks will be consistent along the Ave. Leslie added if there were any crosswalk signs that can be utilized for the Ave. Ralph responded that there is no perfected way to maintain the crosswalk signs. Ownership of the signs would provide better results. BTM has had some pilot programs in the South End though. Ed countered that Sgt. Dunford was not in favor

of them (crosswalk signs) because they turn into projectiles when hit. Richard O'Mara elaborated that they need to calm traffic and make it more pedestrian friendly along the Ave. Leslie stated that this would send a sign that people care about pedestrians. Arlene responded by asking where the funding for sidewalks would come from. Other groups members continued to elaborate on the many deficiencies of sidewalks along the Ave. Ed mentioned that Arlene has given many lists to Molly Dunford. He thinks there is a maintenance breakdown. Ed states that private maintenance is addressing public issues. Leslie added that the American Disabilities Act could provide muscle to initiate remedies to these public nuisances.

VI. Timeline

- Ines discussed the Timeline for the Action Plan distributed at the night's meeting. Ines asked the Task Force to prioritize actions into Immediate (yesterday), Short Term (< 1 year), Mid Term (<1.5 years), and Long Term (>1.5 years). Jeremy will send another spreadsheet that will make the comments in each segment easier to understand.
- Ines mentioned a Business Trend Analysis will be completed by January for the Ave.

VII. Adjourn

- Meeting was adjourned at around 8:05pm.